



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TWO MEXICAN NATIONALS PLEAD GUILTY TO FEDERAL ALIEN SMUGGLING CHARGES

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced that in Midland this morning, Jose Luis Landa-Perez and Mariano Valdez-Munoz of Torreon, Mexico, pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to smuggle and transport illegal aliens.

On August 30, 2005, Union Pacific employees in Hudspeth County, Texas, discovered a deceased male human body next to its tracks near Fort Hancock, Texas. The head of the body was mangled. No identification papers were found on or near the corpse.

Working with Union Pacific, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents determined that the train that had most recently passed through the area would soon be entering Midland, Texas, several hundred miles to the east. After stopping the train, the agents found ten illegal aliens on board. Also, blood was visible on the undercarriage of the train car.

During the investigation, the deceased was identified as 23-year-old Hector Abel Duarte, a native and citizen of Honduras who had crossed the border into the United States illegally the previous day. The illegal aliens found on the train told authorities that Duarte had died as a result of an accident while falling from the train. Furthermore, they identified Landa-Perez and Valdez-Munoz, two of illegal aliens discovered on the train, as the "coyotes," or smuggling ringleaders, and that they each paid a fee of between \$1,500 and \$1,900 to be smuggled into the United States and be transported to Dallas.

Jose Luis Landa-Perez and Mariano Valdez-Munoz remain in federal custody pending sentencing. Since a death occurred during the offense, each defendant faces up to life in federal prison and a maximum \$250,000 fine. No sentencing dates have been scheduled.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Hudspeth County Sheriff's Office, Midland Police Department, Midland County Sheriff's Office together with the police department of Union Pacific Railroad. Assistant United States Attorney John Klassen is prosecuting this case on behalf of the government.

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